

278 The patient knelt and received the medicine in cupped hands,
842 guiding it into her mouth. Lyandileko hung a little medicine
horn on the runnel before pouring. The patient kept the medicine
in her mouth until the runnel was removed and she spat through
the hole. Then the hole was filled up with the petal off which the
medicine had been poured. Lyandileko smeared the patient on the
belly with medicine from a horn, and pushed the horn down under
her bark-cloth to the genitals, in front, and on to the buttocks
behind. As she did this she said, 'If you are barren the banana
will rot, if you are fertile I give you medicine to bear a child.' This
was done for each patient in turn. Then the banana suckers were
planted and the medicine from the remaining petals poured into
bottles (two made of banana leaves, one a Vermouth bottle) for
the patients to take home. They were to take a dose each day for
a week. As the treatment was proceeding Lyandileko talked of
her successes: 'So-and-so drank twice and her belly sprouted. . . .
So-and-so drank and she came back to me pregnant. . . .'

After a week the women came back to see whether their banana
suckers had sprouted. Lyandileko explained: 'The banana sucker
is the child, it sprouts quickly, it is the belly which sprouts quickly.
[787] If it dies they consult an oracle—the woman does not conceive.'
And her son added, 'If a woman's sucker dies Lyandileko tells her:
"Don't say I have not worked for you, don't you see your banana?
You are rotten in yourself, indeed they must have allowed your
cord to fall between your mother's legs."¹ They rejoice very much
if it has grown.' Each petal represents a child; Lyandeliko used
male and female symbols (plantain and sweet banana petals)
alternately for boys and girls. One mother who had no child had
asked for ten, another with two already for eight, another with
three already for six. Lyandileko's arithmetic had gone wrong
for there were only seventeen petals altogether. The horn is the
horn of protection (*ulupembe lwa ipingo*) and it means here, 'May
the "iron" stay nicely within, may it not come out in front or
behind, may it stay inside.' (Iron is a symbol for the reproductive
● [823] capacity of women.) Neither Lyandileko nor her son (who were
both forthright in their discussion of ritual) seemed to be conscious
of any symbolic enactment of coition, though a knowledge of the
symbolism of the death and puberty rituals suggests that.

¹ Cf. Monica Wilson, *Rituals of Kinship*, p. 145.